

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to request your assistance in deploying all available resources of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to combat active wildfires in our National Forests. Even as the American West continues to recover and rebuild from the historic 2020 wildfires, extreme heat and a record-breaking drought are already leading to new fires. Although we truly appreciate your stalwart leadership to develop an interagency wildfire preparedness plan, please know that USDA's resources are urgently needed to prevent and suppress the deadly, destructive, and devastating wildfires in our federal forests in 2021.

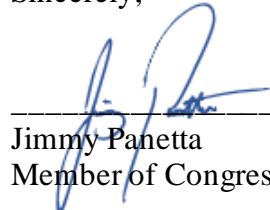
The Willow Fire is currently burning in Monterey County's Ventana Wilderness in the Los Padres National Forest. Since starting on the evening of Thursday, June 17, 2021, this wildfire has burned over 2,800 acres of land. Despite the efforts of over 450 firefighters who have mounted both ground and air operations, the incredibly steep terrain has made it difficult to quell the flames. As of the date of this letter, the fire is only at twenty-six percent containment.

So far, multiple evacuations and evacuation warnings have been issued throughout Big Sur, California, forcing community members who are all too familiar with fire to leave their homes with no guarantee that they will return to intact structures. We ask that you work closely with all levels of U.S. Forest Service leadership to contain this fire and deploy all available forest management actions needed to reduce the risk of fire in the coming months.

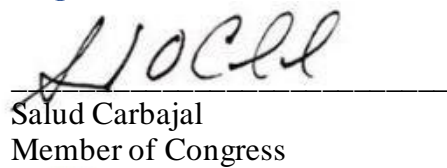
We also ask that you work to alleviate the impact of wildfires on agricultural producers. While not in the direct path of the Willow Fire, agricultural producers along the entire Central Coast are living in fear that smoke from the fire will impact their crops in the ground. In 2020, the California wine industry lost \$3.7 billion in the wake of wildfires, including over \$600 million in lost tonnage from grapes that could not be harvested due to smoke exposure. Frustratingly, winegrape growers impacted by last year's smoke taint have not been able to secure any relief from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program (WHIP+), which has still not been authorized to cover 2020 natural disaster losses. While we in Congress work to secure passage of the WHIP+ Reauthorization Act, we ask that you take all administrative actions available to you to support agricultural producers who will inevitably be impacted by this year's wildfires and wildfire smoke.

We were very pleased to see that, earlier this year, you and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland shared your joint vision for wildland fire preparedness and response and helped form an Interagency Working Group to address worsening drought conditions in the West. We appreciate your proactive efforts to mitigate wildfire risk in our communities. However, as we continue to grapple with wildfires in the coming days, weeks, and months, we ask that you work closely with state and local governments, Tribal Nations, and our offices to reduce wildfires and wildfire risk as soon and as much as possible. As we work together to provide the resources necessary to fight these fires, we also look forward to finding long-term solutions to promote climate resiliency in our federal forests, modernize the firefighting workforce, and protect our agriculture and the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

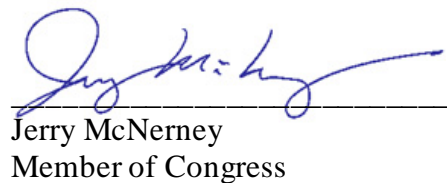
Sincerely,



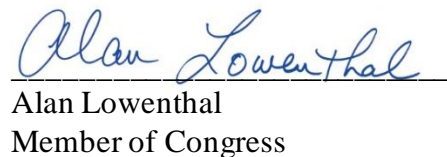
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



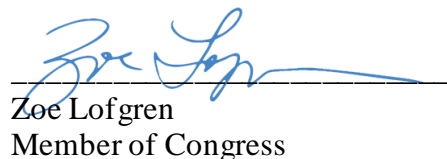
Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney  
Member of Congress



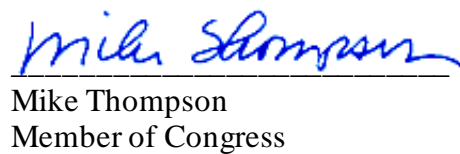
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



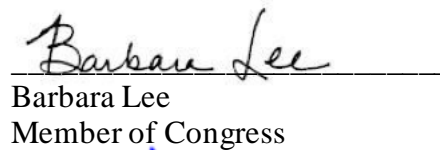
Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



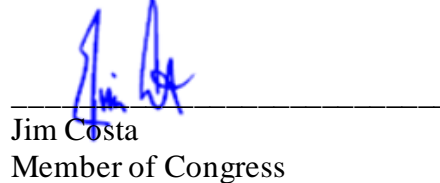
Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



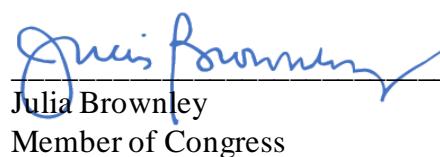
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress



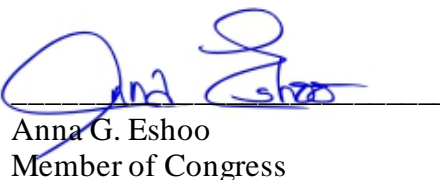
Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress